

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2342
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
USMISSION USUN
USMISSION NATO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 4431

BRUSSELS ALSO FOR USEEC

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: FR, IS, PEPR, UNSC
SUBJECT: FRENCH INVOLVEMENT IN UN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS IN
LEBANON

1. SUMMARY: ISRAEL'S REACTION TO FRENCH INVOLVEMENT
IN UNIFIL HAS BEEN ONE OF AMBIVALENCE. EXPECTATION IN
THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FRENCH FORCES IS COUNTERED BY
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FEARS OF ATTEMPTS TO INCREASE FRENCH POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT
IN THE REGION. END SUMMARY

2. ON ONE HAND, ISRAEL WELCOMED THE NEWS THAT
FRENCH FORCES WOULD BE PARTICIPATING IN UNIFIL, CONFIDENT
THAT THE "PARAS" WOULD BE EFFECTIVE IN CONTROLLING
THE PALESTINIANS IN THEIR SECTOR AND COGNIZANT

OF THE IMPETUS THAT FRANCE, A MAJOR POWER, HAD GIVEN TO THE UN MANDATE. ON THE OTHER HAND, ISRAELI COMMENTATORS EXPRESSED SOME CONCERN THAT THE FRENCH MIGHT USE UNIFIL AS A STEP TOWARD REASSERTING FRENCH POLITICAL INFLUENCE IN THE REGION -- A PROSPECT NOT PARTICULARLY COMFORTING TO ISRAELIS, GIVEN THEIR VIEW OF FRENCH POLICY.

3. WE DISCUSSED FRENCH UNIFIL PARTICIPATION WITH A FRENCH EMBASSY OFFICER, WHO SAID THAT OFFICIALLY THE FRENCH HAVE HEARD LITTLE FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL, WHOSE POLICY APPEARS TO BE ONE OF WATCHFUL WAITING. HE SCOFFED AT THE NOTION OF FRANCE WISHING TO REASSERT ITS PRESENCE IN THE LEVANT OR INCREASE ITS VOICE IN THE PEACE PROCESS. HE CONTENDED THAT FRANCE, A MIDDLE POWER, DOES NONETHELESS HAVE CERTAIN ESTABLISHED RESIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE AREA WHICH INCLUDE PRESERVATION OF THE INTEGRITY OF LEBANON. OTHER FACTORS GUIDING THE FRENCH DECISION ARE THE FACT THAT FRANCE, IN A REALISTIC SENSE, FEELS DIRECTLY AFFECTED BY EVENTS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN (MORE THAN SAY GREAT BRITAIN) AND THE FACT THAT THE LEBANESE LOOK TO THE FRENCH AS THEIR LINK TO EUROPE AND THE WEST DUE TO GEOGRAPHIC AS WELL AS HISTORIC AND CULTURAL CONNECTIONS.

4. ON A RELATED SUBJECT, FRENCH EMBASSY DID NOT FEEL CONFIDENTIAL

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THE OUTCOME OF THE FRENCH ELECTION WOULD HAVE ANY EFFECT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FRANCE AND ISRAEL NOR ON FRENCH MIDDLE EAST POLICY. WHILE THERE HAVE BEEN SOME IMPROVEMENTS IN FRENCH-ISRAELI RELATIONS UNDER GISCARD, THESE SHOULD NOT BE OVERSTATED. ANY EFFORTS BY FRANCE TO GLOSS OVER DIFFERENCES WOULD NOT BE COSMETIC AND LEAD TO EVENTUAL DISILLUSIONMENT. POLICY WILL CONTINUE TO BE DETERMINED BY ESTABLISHED NATIONAL INTERESTS AND NO SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN THE RELATIONSHIP IS FORESEEN.

5. COMMENT: FRENCH EMBASSY REFLECTED SOME DISAPPOINTMENT AT ISRAEL'S SUSPICION OF FRENCH MOTIVES AND SAID THIS ILLUSTRATES THE TYPICAL ISRAELI INABILITY TO SEE THE POSITIVE IN ANYTHING FRANCE DOES. HIS REACTION IS NOT SURPRISING; ISRAEL HAS PERIODICALLY BLASTED FRANCE (AND OTHERS) FOR ABROGATING ITS RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD THE BELEAGUERED CHRISTIANS IN THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR AND WAS NOT PARTICULARLY UPSET OVER THE FAILURE OF THE DE GUINGAUD MISSION TO LEBANON LAST YEAR, BUT NOW THAT FRANCE HAS TAKEN POSITIVE STEPS, IT IS ACCUSED OF ULTERIOR MOTIVES. THE FRENCH NO DOUBT FEEL THAT THEY SHOULD GET BETTER TREATMENT FROM ISRAEL FOR PUTTING THEIR REPUTATION WITH

THE ARABS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PALESTINIANS
ON THE LINE.
LEWIS

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